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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 4-5, 7-8, 12-13 and 15-17 without prejudice or disclaimer.

1. (Previously presented) A method of detecting whether an image to be processed includes an image of a characteristic portion, comprising:

using an imaging device to image a subject at a location to form an image to be processed, and obtaining information about a distance between said subject and said location;

using said information to set upper and lower limitations on a size range of a search window for an image of a characteristic portion with reference to a size of the image to be processed;

determining a size of said search window within said size range between said upper and lower limitations;

cutting sequentially plural images having a predetermined size from said image to be processed, a size of said cut images being limited based on the determined size of said search window;

comparing the cut images with a template of a plurality of templates corresponding to the image of the characteristic portion, if any template of the plurality of templates conforms in size to the determined size of the search window; and

comparing the cut images with a resized template which is resized from a template of the plurality of templates, if no template of the plurality of templates conforms in size to the determined size of the search window.

2. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said using said information comprises using information about a focal length of a photographing lens in addition to the information about said distance.

3. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the image to be processed comprises an image obtained by resizing an input image.

4-5.   (Canceled)

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6. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the template comprises template image data pertaining to the image of the characteristic portion.

7-8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously presented) A method of limiting a range in which an image is processed, comprising

provlding information about a position of a characteristic portion extracted from a first image, the information being obtained by the method according to claim 1;

limiting a range in which an image of a characteristic portion of a second image to be processed followed by said first image to be processed, is retrieved through use of said information.

10. (Previously presented) A computer-readable medium tangibly embodying a program of machine-readable instructions executable by a digital processing apparatus to perform a method of detecting whether an image to be processed includes an image of a characteristic portion, said method comprising:

imaging a subject at a location to form an image to be processed, and obtaining information about a distance between said subject and said location;

using said information to set upper and lower limitations on a size range of a search window for an image of a characteristic portion with reference to a size of the image to be processed;

determining a size of said search window within said size range between said upper and lower limitations;

cutting sequentially plural images having a predetermined size from said image to be processed, a size of said cut images being limited based on the determined size of said search window;

comparing the cut images with a template of a plurality of templates corresponding to the image of the characteristic portion, if any template of the plurality of templates conforms in size to the determined size of the search window; and

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comparing the cut images with a resized template which is resized from a template of the plurality of templates, if no template of the plurality of templates conforms in size to the determined size of the search window.

11. (Original) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, the instructions further comprising limiting a range in which an image of a characteristic portion of a second image to be processed followed by a first image to be processed is retrieved, through use of information about a position of a characteristic portion extracted from the first image.

12-13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously presented) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, further comprising determining the information used to set said upper and lower limitations on said size range.

15-16. (Canceled)

18-21. (Canceled)

22. (Canceled).

23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said distance between said subject and said location is determined during said imaging said subject.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23, wherein said imaging said subject is performed by using an imaging device comprising a range sensor, said distance being determined based on a signal from said range sensor.

25. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said comparing the cut images with said template comprises computing a degree of matching between said image to

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be processed and said template by determining a normalizing cross-correlation function

between an image cut by said search window and said template.

26. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 25, further comprising:

shifting said search window in a scanning direction if said degree of matching does

not reach a threshold value.